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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 068116

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/30/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [RS](#) [LH](#) [BO](#)  
SUBJECT: ASSISTANT SECRETARY GORDON'S MEETING IN CORFU  
WITH LITHUANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

Classified By: EUR A/S PHILIP H GORDON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

1. Summary. This cable is for information. On June 28 in Corfu, in a short discussion with Assistant Secretary Gordon on the margins of the informal meeting of OSCE Foreign Ministers, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Usackas expressed skepticism regarding the near-term prospects for improved relations with Russia, but emphasized the need to continue pushing for cooperation in the NATO-Russia Council. Usackas underscored Lithuania's strong support for NATO's open door policy and called for serious discussion on how to support NATO aspirants. He also described his perceptions of a changing political situation in Belarus and asked the United States to consider increased engagement. Usackas also noted that the decision on whether to accept two Guantanamo Bay detainees will have to wait until after the new Lithuanian President is inaugurated on July 12. End Summary.

Russia  
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2. (C) Usackas outlined Lithuania's current relations with Russia and asked how the United States assessed the prospects for a true reset between Russia and the West. He noted as a positive sign that he had recently met with Foreign Minister Lavrov, the first time the countries had held a meeting at the level of Foreign Ministers in roughly two and a half years. Still, he described the meeting and relations in general as focused mostly on differences, particularly Georgia. A/S Gordon outlined President Obama's broad approach: we should work hard to develop a better relationship with Russia, but not at the expense of our principles or our Allies and partners. That strategy was exemplified in the case of the UNOMIG mandate, where even just before the U.S.-Russia Summit, the United States had supported the effort to force a Russian veto after it was clear that an agreement would not be reached. While stressing our desire for a successful summit, A/S Gordon warned that if we concede across the board, Russia will simply increase its demands. On NATO-Russia relations, Usackas highlighted Lithuania's skepticism for productive results, but underscored the value in using the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) to push Russia to be more cooperative. A/S Gordon agreed, adding that NATO should avoid creating the perception that we are chasing Russia. Our message should be that we are prepared to cooperate more closely in a number of specific areas. But ultimately the results will be determined by Russia's willingness to work with us. Pointing to Lavrov's intervention at the NRC, A/S Gordon said there was little evidence so far that the "reset" was producing a genuinely cooperative response from Moscow.

NATO enlargement  
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3. (C) Usackas said a key issue for the Alliance would be how

to support NATO aspirants. He believes we need better clarity on the criteria for integration, which countries should be packaged together in the "next wave," and how to make it saleable to more skeptical Allies and the broader international community. Recalling that NATO had in previous rounds of enlargement sought a geographic balance when offering membership, he wondered whether it made sense to bring Montenegro and Serbia into the Alliance simultaneously, perhaps together with Ukraine and Georgia -- although he noted that on the latter two, we may have to wait longer. A/S Gordon agreed that Allies needed to have a serious discussion on these issues, and in turn develop a conceptual approach regarding the path to membership. Usackas suggested that a good place to brainstorm would be the informal "Snow Summit" of like-minded states, to be held outside Vilnius in early 2010, and said he would greatly welcome A/S Gordon's participation.

#### Belarus

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¶4. (C) Usackas also used the meeting to share his views on the current situation in Belarus. Lithuania would continue to be a strong advocate in helping to build civil society in Belarus, including through its frequent contacts with the government in Minsk. Usackas was pleased that the EU has increased its engagement, and stressed the importance of continued visits and strong messages. He appealed to A/S Gordon to increase U.S. contacts with Belarus, in tandem with civil society leaders and organizations, characterizing the moment as an important one for Belarus's future trajectory. In particular, he recommended that the United States meet with Head of Presidential Administration Vladimir Makey, whom Usackas described as "the real No. 2." In a recent meeting, Makey had told Usackas that Belarus wants to change course and had asked Usackas to pass that message to the United States. Makey had outlined a vision for Belarus as a transit country that balances relations with Russia and the West.

#### Other Issues

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¶5. (C) Usackas raised the possibility of Lithuania accepting two detainees from Guantanamo Bay. He said he understood the importance of moving forward with a decision, but described the political difficulty in taking definitive steps before President-elect Grybauskaitė's inauguration on July 12.

¶6. (SBU) Noting Lithuania's upcoming Chairmanship of the Community of Democracies, Usackas said he would welcome U.S. suggestions on how to use this organization more effectively.

A/S Gordon said that while this forum can be difficult, given its size and inclusion of members whose commitment to democracy is far from clear, the United States believes it can be valuable. Accordingly, Deputy Steinberg will attend the Ministerial meeting of the Community of Democracies (CD) on July 12. A/S Gordon said it would be useful to keep in touch on this set of issues, particularly once the Assistant Secretary for democracy issues is in place, and suggested that an informal Ministerial meeting of the Steering Board on the margins of UNGA in September could be used to further discuss the future of the CD.

¶7. (SBU) At the conclusion of the meeting, Usackas also indicated an interest in a meeting between President-elect Grybauskaitė and President Obama on the margins of UNGA.

CLINTON